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ABSTRACT

Using elementary and secondary school teaching methods in the college classroom is proposed, and examples of class activities are described. Incorporating elementary or junior high style in-class activity that nevertheless uses and is geared to college-level material, can be successful in making a dull course interesting. Although the classroom procedures were developed for a history and philosophy of education course, the approach can be used in any college or university classroom situation. With a reading assignment as part of the overall plan, the class sessions are devoted to problem areas and points of interest that are identified by both the teacher and students. The reading assignments are reinforced through student participation in an activity. Seven class activities are briefly described. For example, one of the activities, "symbolic images," involves students making pictures to symbolize the meaning the reading assignment had for them. Discussion follows as students show their pictures. Samples of positive students comments about this teaching approach are included. (SW)

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# K-12 Teaching Methods for the University Classroom

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K-12 Teaching Methods for the University Classroom

As a teacher educator at the university level, I have had the opportunity to either observe or to hear about the teaching methods used by the faculty members both in my own department and in the other departments of the various academic areas. I have also been a ninth grade social studies teacher in the public schools, and hence, in this capacity, I have had the opportunity to either observe or to hear about the teaching methods used by my other secondary school colleagues. Likewise, as a supervisor of student teachers at the elementary level, I am familiar with the teaching methods used by the elementary school teacher. These experiences confirmed for me what my own personal expectations, public school education, and university undergraduate and graduate training had led me to believe from the very beginning, namely that, for one reason or another, the higher the educational level, the fewer the instances of real, in-class student involvement.

It seems that as one progresses up through the educational ladder, many of the classes in the various academic areas and teacher education become less student and action oriented and more lecture/pseudo discussion and

teacher centered. In those classes at the college and university level where active student participation still plays a major role, it is, nevertheless, interesting to note that the type of student activity/participation found there is of a variety quite different from the type of student activity/participation found in common practice at the elementary and junior high school levels and, to a lesser degree, in high school. That is, college and university student participation seems to imply a kind of student activity done, most often, outside the classroom as, for example, by way of research papers and projects, reading, and related exercises and short assignments. The activity found at the elementary and junior high school levels and, to a lesser degree, in high school is a kind of activity which is usually incorporated right into a daily lesson plan.

I have found that my incorporation of an elementary school/junior high brand of in-class activity but yet geared to and using college level material has made a tremendous difference in transmogrifing a traditionally dull course into a course full of anticipated surprise and active learning. Though the activities and classroom procedures described below were developed for a history and philosophy of education course, a course

traditionally expected by students to be boring, I believe that the approach herein described can be of use in any college or university classroom situation where something needs to be done inside rather than outside the classroom and within the scope of the daily lesson plan if the overall learning environment is to be improved.

The Daily Lesson Plan

Over the course of a semester, I know that I will have a set number of days of actual in-class instruction. I will also have a textbook with a set number of pages to be covered before the semester ends. Accordingly, I determine the number of days in the semester and the number of pages in the textbook. Having done this, I can assign to my students a set number of pages of reading per day or combination of two days. This allows the course material to be covered at a leisurely pace while also allowing it to be evenly spaced throughout the semester; the usual rush toward the end of the semester is avoided. Likewise, students appreciate the dependability of a set reading assignment in the event they should be absent from class one day. The daily reading assignment will be the only homework assignment given to the students during the semester. I expect, however, an <u>uncommon</u> thoroughness of preparation on the

reading from my students. It has been my experience from having in the past assigned outside research papers and projects that if the procedure outlined in this paper is to be effective, then the students must not have their time spread too thinly over too many other outside responsibilities. Accordingly, with a reading assignment as part of the overall plan, the course of events for each day of class or combination of two days is sequenced as follows: 1) My points over the reading matter with the focus restricted to problem areas and, as time allows, to teacher identified points of keen interest to the student, since this phase of the lesson should take no longer than twenty minutes, 2) Student/teacher examination of review questions, no time restriction, 3) Student questions over problem areas and student comments on student identified points of keen interest, phases two and three are often combined, no time restriction and a possibility of an extension into the next day, and 4) An in-class, student oriented activity to reinforce the reading assignment, occasionally incorporating and/or acting as a substitute for the first three phases on any given day or combination of two days, of short duration with the possibility that this phase might not occur every day if phases two and three last for any length of time.

By starting the class with both my own and my students' anticipated problem areas, the most important parts of the reading selection are sure to be covered; the pressures of time are eliminated. In addition, the procedure outlined above with its emphasis on problem areas and points of keen interest necessitates that the subject matter be examined selectively. It seems inappropriate anymore to cover everything in a reading assignment. Most of the reading will be understood by the students. Likewise, not everything in a reading selection is either of equal importance or of equal interest. In any instance, having examined the reading selectively and having grappled with a set of review questions written specifically to reflect almost verbatim the quizzes of not any great length to be given weekly, the reading is reinforced through student participation in an activity. The same activity should probably not be used any more than one time. The following are a few of the many activities I've developed over the last two years for use in the college classroom:

1. Stand Up, Sit Down - Students stand up and form a circle around the room. As we go from one person to the next consecutively around the circle, each person verbally recalls an important point from the reading

selection. If the statement is incorrect or has already been mentioned by another student, the student speaking takes a seat. Likewise, if the student is unable to recall anything from the reading, then he/she sits down at a desk. We continue to rotate around the circle until only one person is left standing.

2. The Keys to Truth and the Locks of Ignorance - Construction paper is cut to conform to the shape of a large, antique key. Each key has a statement on it from the reading. Some keys have true statements while other keys have false statements. Each student gets a key. After determining whether the key in hand is true or false, keys are exchanged with other students. The exchange of keys continues until all of the keys have been seen by all of the students. Discussion follows the activity for the clarification of problem areas.
3. One of My Favorite Things - Each student writes down on a piece of his/her own paper something found of interest in the

reading. Students, then, mingle in pairs as they discuss their interests relative to the reading.

4. For the Jazz, Man - Students get into small groups. Each group completes the following sentence with as many ideas from the reading as possible: To_____ (for example, Plato, Martin Luther, Thomas Jefferson, John Dewey, etc.), happiness is . . . .
5. Gossip - Students are put into rows with six students or some other number of students to a row. The first student in each row gets a slip of paper having on it an important idea from the reading. The first student whispers the idea to the second student, the second student whispers what he/she heard to the third student and so on down the row. The last student tells us what he/she heard. We laugh and then discuss what needs to be done to get at the original idea on the slip of paper handed to the first student.
6. Symbolic Images - Using posterboard and crayons, pairs of students symbolize through pictures the meaning the reading

selection had for them. Discussion follows as students show their pictures.

7. Editorial Decision Makers - Students are put into rows. A different page of the reading assignment is given to each row of students. The students are given the opportunity to edit their page of the reading selection. Some information will be deleted while other ideas on the page will probably be elaborated upon for further clarification. Students within each row exchange their pages for a comparison of the editorial changes made by the other students in their row. Rows of students, then, exchange pages for a similar comparison. Discussion follows.

Student Reactions

As noted earlier in this paper, the in-class activities outlined above are of a variety most often found at the elementary and junior high school levels. However, I've found that these activities can be an incredibly effective way of enlivening a college classroom environment while also reinforcing the reading matter if these activities are 1) used as a follow-up to the three phased lesson plan already mentioned, 2) introduced as appropriate

for the college classroom by the professor, and 3) geared to the use of the traditional subject matter found at the college level. Field test evaluations over the last two years have resulted in the following student comments about the phased lesson plan and activities:

1. I liked the games because the important concepts seemed to sink in better.
2. I can use these activities when I go out to teach my own classes.
3. At first I felt awkward with the activities but after we got going, it was fun and a real challenge.
4. The more involved I became in the class activities the more I learned.
5. The entire class was enjoyable but the part that caught my interest was the part where we participated in the various exercises. They have been a help in preparing for the quizzes.
6. The activities broke up the hour and helped as a review. They allowed the material to stay with me longer.
7. The activities will beat out a lecture any day.
8. By participating in activities, we brought

out ideas in the reading we might otherwise have missed.

9. I liked the opportunity to discuss the review questions. I also liked hearing what the others thought was interesting in our reading assignment.
10. You're the first teacher I've had who reviewed before tests and I think it's great! The discussions were lively and I liked the informal style. I felt comfortable when commenting and I think that's important.
11. I liked having the reading assignments spaced out evenly over the semester. If I missed a class, I still knew what to read for the next day.
12. I thought this class would be boring, but it was the exact opposite.
13. You come to class wondering what will happen that day - always that element of surprise.
14. You had to be prepared to say what you found to be interesting in what you read. It kept me up on the reading.
15. This class helps you discipline yourself.

In addition to the student comments made above on my course evaluation form and as further evidence of a positive student response, I have found that my class sections close long before all of the students who want to take the course have had a chance to enroll. This is a good feeling when your livelihood depends upon course enrollment. It would be particularly crucial in elective course situations. In any instance, besides the good feeling that comes with a strong class enrollment, there is also the satisfaction that comes from seeing your students happy, active, and totally unaware of time - no watch watching or yawns. A similar type of learning environment is possible in just about any college or university classroom setting regardless of the academic area. Use of the methods described in this paper could make it reality.